

Japanese Loanwords in Northeast Chinese Dialect

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1. Introduction

China is a country with a rich culture and long history. There are approximately 80 dialects widely used in China. Among them, the dialect of northeast China is one of the dialects affected by the contact with the Japanese language. The northeast part of China consists of three provinces that cover an area of 790,000 km², which accounts for 8.3% of the total area. The population is 106 million, which is 8.4% of the total population. The northeast-dialect-speaking areas include Heilongjiang, Jilin, and Liaoning Provinces, and 10 cities and counties in eastern Inner Mongolia, with a total of 172 cities and counties. As a branch of the northern dialect, the northeastern dialect plays an important role in the development of Mandarin. The northeastern dialect maintains a fairly high degree of consistency in terms of pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. In addition, it can be easily understood even outside the northeast area because of its similarity with Mandarin, which is an outstanding feature of the northeastern dialect.

After Siyu GE learned Japanese, he was surprised to find that some words of the dialect of Northeast China were extremely similar to Japanese. These words can be divided into two categories: (1) words with similar pronunciation, or phonological similarities, and (2) the ones with similar Chinese characters, or orthographic resemblance.

Few studies have been conducted in this area. Data in Sections 2 and 3

were taken from Guo (2012), written in Mandarin. Besides, Ren and Wang (2014) and Zhou (2015) are the only publications on this dialect.

2. Phonological Similarity

The first group includes the words with similar pronunciations. For example,

- | | | | |
|-----|--|--|------------------------|
| (1) | ^{t á t á m i}
榻榻密 ¹ | [t ^h a.t ^h a.mi] | (Northeastern dialect) |
| | ^{tatami}
畳 | [ta.ta.mi] | (Japanese) |
| | “mat” | | |
| (2) | ^{w á s i}
瓦斯 | [uə.su] | (Northeastern dialect) |
| | ^{g á s u}
瓦斯 | [ga.su] | (Japanese) |
| | “gas” | | |
| (3) | ^{m á g ū l ù}
马轱辘 | [ma.ku.lu] | (Northeastern dialect) |
| | ^{m a n h o r u}
マンホール | [man.ho:ru] | (Japanese) |
| | “manhole cover” | | |
| (4) | ^{g a i}
街 | [kai] | (Northeastern dialect) |
| | ^{g a i}
街 | [gai] | (Japanese) |
| | “street” | | |

(Guo 2012: 197, IPAs were added by the authors)

¹ Tones are marked with diacritics, following the convention in Pinyin. The first high and flat tone is marked with ˊ. The second rising tone is acute ˊ. The third low falling and rising tone is represented by haček ˇ. The fourth tone, the falling one is marked with a grave accent symbol ˋ.

3. Orthographic Resemblances

The second group includes the words that share similar Chinese characters. For example,

- | | | | |
|-----|-----------------------------|---------------|------------------------|
| (5) | ^{biànsuǒ}
便所 | [biən.suǒ] | (Northeastern dialect) |
| | ^{bēn jǐo}
便所 | [ben.dʒo] | (Japanese) |
| | “toilet” | | |
| (6) | ^{guǒ zǐ}
果子 | [kuo.zu] | (Northeastern dialect) |
| | ^{kā shǐ}
菓子 | [ka.çi] | (Japanese) |
| | “dessert” | | |
| (7) | ^{mǎnyuánér}
满员儿 | [man.yuən.ər] | (Northeastern dialect) |
| | ^{mǎn-in}
満員 | [man.in] | (Japanese) |
| | “full” | | |
| (8) | ^{bìngyuàn}
病院 | [biŋ.yuən] | (Northeastern dialect) |
| | ^{b y o i n}
病院 | [bjo.in] | (Japanese) |
| | “hospital” | | |
| (9) | ^{xiào xiào}
学校 | [çiao.çiao] | (Northeastern dialect) |
| | ^{gā k k o}
学校 | [gak.ko:] | (Japanese) |
| | “school” | | |

(Guo 2012: 198)

4. Semantic Changes

In contrast, there are some Japanese words that have different meanings in the northeast dialect. Originally, in Japanese, 好々爺^{kōkōya} [ko:ko:ja] referred to a kind old man, which is a commendatory word. Nevertheless, after adaptation to the Chinese northeast dialect, the word picked a slightly

negative meaning of a “yes-man” (Ren and Wang 2014). The original meaning of 赤裸々 [^{seki.rara}se.ki.ra.ra] is “undisguised” in Japanese, which turned to mean “naked” in the northeast dialect (ibid.). As for 下野 [^{ge.ya}ge.ja], the meaning is “resignation of politician,” and it is a verb in Japanese. Nonetheless, in the northeast dialect, it means an objective result of becoming a civilian (ibid.).

In addition, there are also many short stories about the influence of Japanese on the northeast dialect. In the era of Japanese occupation, the plague was propagated in the northeast of China, and many people died because of this. People saw that the Japanese soldiers who were burying dead bodies shouted これら [^{ko.re.ra}ko.re.ra] (meaning “these”), which explained why people called plagues 虎烈拉 [^{hu.li.e.la}hu.lje.la] (ibid.: 108).

5. Professional Terms

In addition to terminology used in everyday language, there are many professional terms that came from Japanese. Considering modern history, it can be seen that the Harbin–Dalian and Shenyang–Dandong Railways in China were placed under the care of the Japanese Kanto Army during the Manchurian period of 14 years, so that many dialects around the railways were naturally affected. For example, during that period, the word 走行 [^{so.ko}so.ko:] was often used on train radio, and it is still used on train radio in modern times (Ren and Wang 2014). Similarly, there are many northeastern dialects in the steel and textile industries that resemble Japanese.

In addition to the direct adaptation of Japanese words, there are many words got expanded through Japanese words. For example, one of the representative vocabularies in northeastern dialect is 瞎白话 [^{xiabaihua}cia.pai.hua], whose etymology is 喋る [^{shaberu}ca.be.ru]. In Japanese, the meaning of 喋る [^{shaberu}ca.

be.ru] is “chattering.” However, in the northeastern dialect, the meaning of ^{xiábáihuà} 瞎白话 is not only chattering, but also that someone’s statement is untrustworthy (ibid.).

In addition, ^{oyatsu} おやつ [o.ja.t̃su] in Japanese literally means the Dim Sum (a kind of dessert) at three o’clock in the afternoon. But in the era of Japanese occupation, people in northeast of China saw the Japanese people call delicious food that Chinese people were unallowed to eat ^{oyatsu} おやつ [o.ja.t̃su]. Therefore, they started to call eating delicious food occasionally ^{dáyǎjì} 打牙祭 [ta.ya.t̃ci] (ibid.: 109).

6. Geographic Distribution of Japanese Loanwords

The distribution of the northeast dialect that came from Japanese has some remarkable characteristics as discussed further in the text. The examples in this Section are taken from Ren and Wang (2014).

(i) It is simply distributed along the railway line.

As it was exemplified by ^{sokō} 走行 [so:ko:] above, the northeastern dialects were influenced by the Japanese along the northeast railway. The geographic area of Japanese loanwords accurately and properly conforms to the railway zone. Let us provide more examples in addition to ^{sokō} 走行 [so:ko:] that can confirm this. For example, in the era of Japanese occupation, people saw the collective house built for Japanese people in China and heard Japanese people call it ^{shataku} 社宅 [ca.ta.ku]. That is how ^{shèzhái} 社宅 [səʔsai] became a northeast dialect word.

(ii) It is distributed in town centers.

During Japanese occupation, the Japanese army restricted the weight of rice and many grains that the Chinese people could eat in town. Since Japanese called the food allocation ^{haikyū} 配給 (haikyu [haikju:]), the northeast

Chinese people use this word in their life today.

In addition, school education is an important part of the cultural life in towns. During Japanese occupation, young Chinese learned Japanese in school. Until 20 years ago, it was common to see older people speak Japanese very well. When one of the authors (Siyu) was a child, he liked to listen to the story about that era from his grandparents and ask them about the Japanese words. He assumes other young generationers also heard about Japan from their grandparents in their childhood. Such experiences have fostered a very complicated feeling toward Japan because of the intimacy toward Japan exclusive to other areas. The knowledge accompanied not only the bad points of that era, but also the strengths of Japan in many fields, such as architecture. Many northeastern youths want to study in Japan and use the knowledge to build a better China. This is also the reason why so many northeast people like Japan and move to Japan for studies and work.

7. Phonological Characteristics of the Northeastern Dialect Eased Adaptation of Japanese

In addition to the historical reasons, there are some phonological similarities between Japanese and the northeast dialect. Because of these, the northeast dialect was easily influenced by Japanese.

(i) Alternation between a flat and warped tongue

One of the most important features of the northeast dialect is the alternation between a flat and warped tongue. In Chinese, a flat tongue articulates denti-alveolar consonants [z, c, s] ($\sqrt{t\hat{s}}$ /, $\sqrt{t\hat{s}^h}$ /, /s/), and a warped tongue articulates retroflex [zh, ch, sh] ($\sqrt{t\hat{s}}$ /, $\sqrt{t\hat{s}^h}$ /, /s/). For example, the pronunciation of 怎 (zen [$\sqrt{t\hat{s}ən}$]) in Mandarin is in northeast dialect, [zhen]

([tʃən]). In addition, 正, whose pronunciation in Mandarin is [zheng] ([tʃəŋ]) is in northeast dialect, [zeng] ([tʃəŋ]).

In Japanese, the character whose pronunciation is articulated with a warped tongue in Chinese turns out to be [sa, ta] ([sa, t^ha]) with a flat tongue. For example, 札, whose pronunciation in Mandarin is [zha] ([ʃa]) is [satsu] ([satsi]), in Japanese is articulated with a flat tongue. Furthermore, 産, whose pronunciation in Mandarin is [chan] ([tʃ^han]) is [san] ([saŋ]) in Japanese, articulated with a flat tongue. There are many examples such as these. Such systematic mapping helps speakers of the northeast dialect in Japanese language acquisition.

(ii) Alternation between [r] (/ɹ/) and [l] (/l/)

In the northeast dialect, [r] in Mandarin is always replaced by [l]. For example, 扔, whose pronunciation in Mandarin is [reŋ] ([ɹəŋ]), changes to [leŋ] (/ləŋ/) in the northeastern dialect. Furthermore, 蕊, whose pronunciation in Mandarin is [rui] (/ɹei/), becomes [lui] (/lei/) in the northeastern dialect (Zhou 2015: 137). In English loanwords, [r] also changes to [l] (pronunciation /l/ in Chinese).

8. Conclusion

This paper examines the relationship between the Japanese language and northeast Chinese dialect, elaborated in six parts. China and Japan had frequent cultural exchanges since ancient times. The two countries learned from each other from various aspects (e.g., architecture, culture, and characters in writing systems). Through this research, we have come to feel more about the exchange of cultures between China and Japan. In Siyu's opinion, unfortunately, the Chinese and Japanese people do not know each other as well as Chinese know Western countries. We hope this paper

can serve as a link with regard to friendly exchanges between China and Japan and would like to contribute to them.

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